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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the drug interests of a senior high school population via a question-writing technique. Specific drug interests in the areas of herbal drugs, illicit drugs, over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs, and commercial drugs were examined by requesting students to write out what questions they felt their peers had about drugs. The 75 students wrote 179 questions; 97 relating to illicit drugs, 36 to commercial drugs, 14 to over-the-counter drugs, 15 to herbal drugs, and 17 to prescription drugs. The students expressed special interest in drug addiction, governmental control of drugs, and the effects of drugs found in caffeine, cola, and marijuana. The questions identified in this survey are intended to be helpful in providing guidelines for drug education programs. (DS)

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A DRUG INTEREST SURVEY OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Introduction

The continuing problem of drug use and abuse among secondary school youth has been evident for some years. Many drug education programs have been developed and implemented with emphasis on illegal drugs, drug utilization, physical and mental effects of drugs, and acceptable methods of drug abuse treatment. Some of these programs neglected to precisely determine the areas of drug education in which the students themselves indicated greatest interest. Following is one methodology for determining what specifically children and youth desire to know about drugs, that could be useful in planning a drug education program.

Purposes

The purposes of this study were to determine the drug interests of a senior high school population via a question writing technique.

Procedures

Specific drug interest questions in the areas of herbal drugs, illicit drugs, over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs, and commercial drugs were examined by requesting

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students to write out what questions they felt their peers had about drugs. Each of the five categories of drugs were defined as follows:

1. Herbal Drugs - These substances are from any seed plant whose stems wither away to the ground after each seasons growth and may be used as medicine, seasoning, or food.

2. Illicit Drugs - These are the drugs whose sale, purchase, or use is prohibited by law or custom.

3. Over-the-Counter Drugs - These are drugs which may be purchased without a prescription.

4. Prescription Drugs - These are drugs suggested by a physician for a specific medical purpose.

5. Commercial Drugs - These are drugs which are ingested regularly that have a drug-like effect on our bodies and whose use is not regulated by law. In this particular study, the additional drug areas of alcohol and tobacco were excluded.

The instrument was administered to seventy-five senior high school students by certified health educators. A total of 179 questions, averaging 2.39 questions per respondent were written by the senior high students.

The questions were grouped by drug areas and questions of the same nature ranked. Each of the drug area questions were further analyzed by grouping into thirty-four key concepts, since generally more than one concern was expressed in most of the questions written. The number of times similar questions were written was noted, as well as the per cent of questions within similar categories. The data gathered may be found in Tables 1 - 6.

Data Results

The seventy-five students wrote 179 questions. Ninety-seven questions or 54.19% of the questions related to illicit drugs, whereas thirty-six questions or 20.11% were related to commercial drugs. Over-the-counter drugs and herbal drug questions numbered fourteen and fifteen questions or 7.82% and 8.38 respectively. Seventeen questions or 9.50% of the questions related to prescription drugs.

Herbal Drugs

Of the fifteen questions written by the senior high school students related to herbal drugs, the students expressed the greatest interest in the effects of the various herbal drugs. Additional interest was noted in herbal addiction, the classification of various herbal drugs, and the use and the misuse of herbal drugs.

Illicit Drugs

The senior high school students wrote ninety-seven questions, noting a greater interest in the areas of the effects of illicit drugs, the drug marijuana, and governmental control of illicit drugs. Additional interest was expressed in the concepts of addiction, the use of illicit drugs, the composition of illicit drugs, police control of drugs, and drug classification.

Over-the-Counter Drugs

The fourteen questions written by the senior high school students, indicated a greater degree of interest in the drug

TABLE 1

Questions Asked About Herbal Drugs by Senior High Students

Rank	Times Asked	Question Asked
1	4	What are the effects of herbal drugs?
2.5	3	Are herbal drugs bad for you?
2.5	3	Why are herbal drugs a drug?
4.5	2	Can you get addicted to herbel drugs?
4.5	2	Are herbal drugs harmful?
6	1	If addicted to herbal drugs, can you get off it?

aspirin and in the purchasing of over-the-counter drugs. Additional interest was expressed in addiction, the effects of over-the-counter drugs, the treatment uses for over-the-counter drugs, the composition of over-the-counter drugs, and in governmental control of over-the-counter drugs.

Prescription Drugs

The senior high school students wrote seventeen questions concerning prescription drugs. They expressed greater interest in the effects of prescription drugs and lesser interests in the areas of classification of prescription drugs, excess use of prescription drugs, the physician's role in drug use, the selling of prescription drugs, addiction, governmental control of prescription drugs, and drug treatment potentials.

Commercial Drugs

The thirty-six questions written by the senior high school students, indicated a greater degree of interest in the substances caffeine and cola, and the effects of commercial drug use. Also, the students indicated lesser interest in commercial drug addiction, and in the classification of commercial drugs.

All Drug Areas

Upon reviewing the 197 questions written by the senior high school students, the students expressed greater interest in the effects of all types of drugs, the drugs especially found in caffeine and cola, the drug marijuana, drug addiction, governmental control of drugs, and the areas of illicit and commercial drugs. Lesser degrees of interest were indicated

TABLE 2

Ten Most Asked Questions About Illicit Drugs by Senior High School Students

Rank	Times Asked	Question Asked
1	32	What effects do certain drugs have on people?
2	15	Will pot be legalized?
3	7	Is alcohol or pot worse?
4	4	What are the effects of marijuana?
5	3	How many people our age take drugs?
10	2	Why are some drugs more fatal?
10	2	How can you tell if a person is taking drugs?
10	2	Which drugs hurt you?
10	2	Does marijuana lead to other drugs?
10	2	Is marijuana as bad as cigarettes?
10	2	Do you forget after smoking pot?
10	2	Why is marijuana illegal?
10	2	Why are some drugs illegal?
10	2	How are drugs regulated?
10	2	Are the tough drug laws doing what they are supposed to?
10	2	Are all drugs harmful?

TABLE 3

Questions Asked About Over-the-Counter Drugs by Senior High Students

Rank	Times Asked	Question Asked
1	4	Should all over-the-counter drugs be sold over-the-counter?
3	2	Can you become adicted to over-the-counter drugs?
3	2	Does aspirin help the aches and pains of sick people?
5.5	1	Should over-the-counter drugs be examined more carefully before they are given out?
5.5	1	What happens to babies if the mother is constantly taking over-the-counter drugs?
5.5	1	Is cough syrup addicting?
5.5	1	Is taking aspirin everyday addicting?
5.5	1	Can aspirin cure some diseases?
5.5	1	What are the differences between various kinds of aspirin and cold tablets?

TABLE 4

Questions Asked About Prescription Drugs by Senior High Students

Rank	Times Asked	Question Asked
1	4	Are there any effects that are harmful to the body?
2	3	What will happen if you take some other drug with them?
3	2	What makes some drugs prescription drugs and other over-the-counter drugs?
7.5	1	Is it better to let a headache to away naturally?
7.5	1	Can you become dependent upon prescription drugs?
7.5	1	How do you obtain birth control pills at an early age?
7.5	1	When a doctor prescribes something, you don't usually know what it is or what it will do to you?
7.5	1	How come doctors can give out certain drugs that are regulated by law?
7.5	1	Can any drugs prevent cancer?
7.5	1	Are child resistant caps effective?
7.5	1	Are prescription drugs always necessary?
7.5	1	Can't prescription drugs sometimes fall in the illicit drug category if they are abused or maybe even sold?
7.5	1	Why is it dangerous to take medication and liquor?

TABLE 5

Questions Asked About Commercial Drugs by Senior High Students

Rank	Times Asked	Question Asked
1	9	What can coke do to the body over a period of time?
2.5	7	What can coffee do to the body over a period of time?
2.5	7	What are the effects of commercial drugs?
4	6	Can you get addicted to all commercial drugs?
5	4	Why are coke, cocoa and tea considered a drug?
6	2	Can commercial drugs hurt you?
7	1	How can anyone get high on coke, cocoa, or tea?

in the buying and selling of drugs, drug treatment, drug use and abuse, the drug aspirin, and drug composition.

Implications for Drug Education

A drug education program could be made meaningful for students if the specific knowledges and attitudes presented are directly related to present or future problems. For example, student questions indicated such concerns as, what effects do certain drugs have on people; is alcohol or pot worse; and will pot be legalized. These students desired additional information about coffee and cola, as well as information about various herbal drugs. Questions such as these can be covered in a drug program, provided the teacher is cognizant of the need and desire for particular information.

In addition, some of the questions asked requested specific knowledge such as, will pot be legalized. Other questions asked, such as, why are there so many different kinds of aspirin, might really mean, which brand of aspirin is best. Thus a real student concern is identified.

In conclusion, a drug education program that is in part planned to include particular student expressed needs, may provide a means for establishing positive drug behaviors. The instrument utilized in this study is one educators might consider to determine student drug interests and needs.

TABLE 6

Ten Most Asked Questions About All Drugs by Senior High Students

Rank	Times Asked	Question Asked
1	32	What effect do certain drugs have on people?
2	15	Will pot be legalized?
3	9	What can coke do to the body over a period of time?
5	7	What can coffee do to the body over a period of time?
5	7	What are the effects of commercial drugs?
5	7	Is alcohol or pot worse?
7	6	Can you get addicted to all commercial drugs?
10	4	Why are coke, cocoa, and tea considered a drug?
10	4	What are the effects of herbal drugs?
10	4	What are the effects of marijuana?
10	4	Should all over-the-counter drugs be sold over-the-counter?
10	4	Are there any effects that are harmful to the body? (prescriptions)